IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a listing of the pending claims:

Claims 1-23 (Canceled).

24. (Previously Amended) A polynucleic acid selected from the group consisting of

CCC TGT GAG GAA CTW CTG TCT TCA CGC (SEQ ID NO 1),

GGT GCA CGG TCT ACG AGA CCT (SEQ ID NO 2),

TCT AGC CAT GGC GTT AGT RYG AGT GT (SEQ ID NO 3),

TTG GGC GYG CCC CCG C (SEQ ID NO 20), and

TCT GCG GAA CCG GTG A (SEQ ID NO 27),

or the complement thereof, wherein W represents A or T, R represents G or A, and Y represents T or C,

or a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

25. (Previously Amended) A set of oligonucleotides comprising at least one oligonucleotide of 15 to 50 nucleotides, said at least one oligonucleotide comprising at least 15 contiguous nucleotides chosen from any of SEQ ID NOs: 1, 2 or 3, or the complement thereof wherein W represents A or T, R represents G or A, and Y represents T or C, or a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

26. (Previously Amended) A polynucleic acid consisting of 10 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes with the sequence of SEQ ID NO:20 wherein Y represents T or C, or a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

27. (Previously Amended) A polynucleic acid consisting of 27 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes with the sequence of SEQ ID NO 27, or the complement thereof, or a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

28. (Amended) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of a hybridization reaction with a polynucleic acid of any of claims 24, 26, 27, 37 or 39-42.

29. (Previously Amended) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of a hybridization reaction with a polynucleic acid of SEQ ID NO 20 or 27 or the complement thereof wherein Y represents T or C, or with a corresponding polynucleic acid wherein T has been replaced by U.

30. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 28 wherein said polynucleic acids are coupled to a solid support.

31. (Previously Amended) A method according to claim 29 wherein said polynucleic acids are coupled to a solid support.

32. (Previously Amended) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of an amplification reaction using (a set of) primers that specifically hybridize to SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 3, or the complement thereof wherein W represents A or T, R represents G or A and Y represents T or C; and with SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO: 4, or the complement thereof.

34. (Previously Amended) A diagnostic kit for the detection of HCV in a biological sample comprising at least one of the polynucleic acids of any of claims 24, 26, 27, 37 or 39-42.

35. (Previously Amended) A method for the identification of a previously amplified HCV 5' untranslated region fragment comprising hybridizing a polynucleic acid according to any of claims 24, 26, 27, 37 and 39-42 to said 5'region.

36. (Previously Amended) Process for general amplification of the 5' UR region of HCV isolates involving at least one of the following primers

a primer of 15 to 50 nucleotides specifically hybridizing with SEQ ID NO: 1 or the complement thereof, wherein W represents A or T, and

a primer of 15 to 50 nucleotides specifically hybridizing with SEQ ID NO:3 or the complement thereof, wherein R represents A or G and Y represents T or C.

37. (Previously Added) A polynucleic acid consisting of 15 to 50 nucleotides

which specifically hybridizes with at least one of SEQ ID NO:1, SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO:3.

38. (Previously Added) A set of oligonucleotides comprising at least a first oligonucleotide of 15 to 50 nucleotides and a second oligonucleotide of 15 to 50 nucleotides, said first and second oligonucleotides each independently comprising at least 15 contiguous nucleotides chosen from any of SEQ ID NOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 20 and 27, or the complement thereof wherein W represents A or T, R represents G or A and Y represents T or C, or a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

39. (Previously Added) A polynucleic acid consisting of 10 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes under conditions allowing discrimination of up to 1 nucleotide mismatch with the sequence of SEQ ID NO:20 wherein Y represents T or C, or with a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

40. (Previously Added) A polynucleic acid consisting of 21 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes with the sequence of SEQ ID NO:20 or the complement thereof wherein Y represents T or C, or with a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

41. (Previously Added) A polynucleic acid consisting of 21 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes under conditions allowing discrimination of up to 1 nucleotide mismatch with the sequence of SEQ ID NO:20 or the complement thereof

wherein Y represents T or C, or with a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

42. (Previously Added) A polynucleic acid consisting of 27 to 50 nucleotides which specifically hybridizes under conditions allowing discrimination of up to 1 nucleotide mismatch with the sequence of SEQ ID NO:27 or the complement thereof, or with a corresponding sequence wherein T has been replaced by U.

43. (Previously Added) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of a hybridization reaction with a set of oligonucleotides of claims 25 or 38.

44. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 43 wherein said oligonucleotides are coupled to a solid support.

45. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 28 wherein said polynucleic acids are capture probes.

46. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 29 wherein said polynucleic acids are capture probes.

47. (Previously Added) A method according to claim 43 wherein said oligonucleotides are capture probes.

48. (Previously Added) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of an amplification reaction using (a set of) primers that specifically hybridize with SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO:3, or the complement thereof wherein W represents A or T, R represents G or A and Y represents T or C; and with SEQ ID NO:20 or SEQ ID NO:27, or the complement thereof wherein Y represents T or C.

49. (Previously Added) A method for detecting the presence of an infection with an HCV virus in a biological sample by means of an amplification reaction using (a set of) primers that specifically hybridize with SEQ ID NO:20 or SEQ ID NO:27, or the complement thereof wherein Y represents T or C; and with SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO:4, or the complement thereof.

50. (Previously Added) A diagnostic kit for the detection of HCV in a biological sample comprising a set of oligonucleotides of claims 25 or 38.

51. (Previously Added) A method for the identification of a previously amplified HCV 5' untranslated region fragment comprising hybridizing a set of oligonucleotides of claims 25 or 38 to said 5' region.

52. (Previously Added) The process of claim 36 wherein said primer of 15 to 50 nucleotides specifically hybridizing with SEQ ID NO: 1 is combined with a primer

hybridizing to the region extending from nucleotide -68 to nucleotide -1 or the complement of said region.

53. (Previously Added) The process of claim 36 wherein said primer of 15 to 50 nucleotides specifically hybridizing with SEQ ID NO:3 is combined with a primer hybridizing to the region extending from nucleotide -68 to nucleotide -1 or the complement of said region.

54. (Previously Added) The process according to claim 52 or 53 wherein said primer hybridizing to the region extending from nucleotide -68 to nucleotide -1 or the complement of said region is defined by SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO:4.